

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: SEPTEMBER 20, 2010

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

THROUGH: JAMES K. HARTMAN, CITY MANAGER

FROM: FAROLL HAMER, DIRECTOR
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ZONING

SUBJECT: ANNUAL UPDATE ON THE GREEN BUILDING POLICY

I. OVERVIEW

In April 2009, the City Council adopted the green building policy that set a standard for green building in future development projects. With the adoption of this policy, the City memorialized its expectation for green buildings and provided developers with that information from at an early point in the development process. The policy requires LEED Certified or equivalent for residential developments and LEED Silver or equivalent for non-residential developments. In addition, flexibility is explicitly part of the policy, allowing the Planning Director to waive the requirements of the policy for small or unique cases that may not be able to financially comply with the policy. Monitoring and annual reporting to track how effective the policy is and review the cases that have requested flexibility is also a component of the policy. This is the first annual report since the adoption of the policy.

II. PROJECT SUMMARY

Although the current economic climate has reduced development activity in the City, there were still a number of projects that were reviewed and approved since adoption of the policy. In most cases, the applicants agreed to comply with the standards set by the policy. A few cases did warrant flexibility from the policy and one used the equivalency provision to deviate from LEED. The summary below lists each of the projects approved in the last year and describes how they complied with the policy. Of the eight development cases, four met the standard. The four that required a more flexible approach are discussed briefly below. *Attachment #1* provides images of the eight developments.

Month Approved	Development	Location	Project Summary	Green Building Requirement	Meets Policy
June 2009	Lane Development	2200 and 2250 Mill Road	474,000 sf of residential and 585,000 sf of office	LEED Certified for residential portion and LEED Silver for office	Yes
	Institute for Defense Analysis (IDA)	4880 Mark Center Drive	368,400 sf of office	LEED Silver	Yes
September 2009	Restaurant Depot	4600 Eisenhower Avenue	72,000 sf warehouse	Requested flexibility – will achieve LEED Certification instead of LEED Silver	No
October 2009	Church of God	630 N. Patrick Street	2,725 sf addition to the existing church	Requested flexibility – will incorporate green building design elements into the project	No
	Polk Elementary School	5000 Polk Avenue	6,875 sf addition to the existing school	Project will seek LEED Silver, but at a minimum will attain LEED Certification	Yes
February 2010	Virginia Theological Seminary	3737 Seminary Road	1,660 sf addition to maintenance building and improvements to overall site infrastructure	Requested flexibility – will incorporate green building design elements into the project	No
April 2010	Hoffman Blocks 11 & 12	2210 Eisenhower Avenue	1.3 million sf of residential and ground floor retail	Green Globes (LEED equivalent)	Yes
May 2010	The King Building at 923	923 King	1,492 sf addition for a two story restaurant and two residential units	Requested flexibility – will incorporate green building design elements into the project	No
Upcoming cases	The Calvert	3110 Mt. Vernon Avenue	Residential	LEED Certified	
	Quaker Lane Office Building	21 N. Quaker Lane	Office	LEED Silver	

Flexibility and Equivalency Requests

Restaurant Depot: The applicant for Restaurant Depot requested flexibility from the policy for several reasons. First, the applicant had started developing the plans for the building and site prior to adoption of the policy. Although a formal application was not filed until after the policy was adopted, a lot of work had already gone into the design of the building and site. Second, the warehouse use is more industrial in nature, which was one of the uses the policy acknowledged may need a more flexible approach. Third, Restaurant Depot was originally thought to be an interim use which would change once that portion of the City is redeveloped. As a result, requiring LEED Silver may not have been economically feasible given the payback period. As an alternative to achieving LEED Silver, the applicant committed to LEED Certified. Given the timing and use of the development, staff felt this was an appropriate compromise that still achieved some measure of green building.

Church of God: The Church of God addition triggered a site plan due to the size of the addition relative to the original building; however, the overall proposal was fairly small. It would be difficult for the applicant to achieve LEED Silver given the small size and the costs to upgrade to the existing, historic building. Churches and historic building are uses identified in the policy as possibly requiring a more flexible approach. Rather than achieve some level of LEED certification, the applicant agreed to incorporate green features into the design of the building and site, including using recycled materials, using water-efficient fixtures, and potentially treating stormwater on-site. Staff agreed that these improvements would be sufficient to comply with the intent of the policy.

Virginia Theological Seminary: Similar to the Church of God addition, the size of the addition of the existing VTS building triggered a site plan even though it is fairly small. It would be difficult for the applicant to obtain a LEED certification for this development. The applicant has incorporated many green elements into the project, including a green roof and windows that allow more natural light within the building. In addition, the upgrades to this building will actually help the entire VTS campus be more energy efficient. Staff felt it was appropriate to allow flexibility from the policy given the green improvements undertaken as an alternative to official certification.

Hoffman Blocks 11 and 12: As a residential development, the policy calls for a green building certification level of LEED Certified or equivalent. Instead of using the LEED program, the applicant plans to use an alternate green building program called Green Globes. Although the two programs are similar, Green Globes has different requirements for energy modeling and reporting/verification. In addition, eligibility for obtaining one Green Globe does not require as many points as LEED Certified. As a compromise, staff recommended that if the applicant pursues certification under Green Globes, they would be required to obtain 40% of the possible points, which is similar to the LEED Certified level.

The King Building at 923: Similar to the Church of God and the Virginia Theological addition, the size of the addition to the existing, historic building triggered a site plan even though the overall development is fairly small. It would be difficult for the applicant to achieve LEED Silver given the small size of the building and the costs to upgrade to the existing, historic

building. As noted above, the policy identified historic building as a use that would possibly require a more flexible approach. The applicant has agreed to incorporate green features into the design of the building and site, including recycling demolished materials, using water-efficient fixtures, and potentially treating stormwater on-site. Staff agreed that these improvements would be sufficient to comply with the intent of the policy.

III. PHASE TWO ACTIVITIES

Staff has begun work on Phase Two of the green building program which is focusing on three primary areas: enforcement of the adopted policy, existing buildings, and incentives. With regard to enforcement, the City has met with members of the Green Building Work Group to discuss ideas for creating an effective enforcement strategy. The group is looking at enforcement strategies that are in place in other jurisdictions, in particular those in this region. Green building is a relatively new requirement for new development and there unfortunately are not a lot of examples of implemented enforcement strategies. For the most part, other jurisdictions are implementing a bond or fee that is refunded upon certification to ensure the developer attains the agreed upon level of green building certification. Staff is researching these programs to determine an appropriate amount to ensure that the developer will do everything they can to reach their commitment without it being a financial limitation for the development.

During Phase One, staff noted that the policy would only address new development and a different strategy would be needed to tackle greening existing development. Staff is exploring a variety of methods to encourage existing buildings to make green retrofits. These methods could include providing incentives to owners to make improvements, as well as providing information as to what improvements are the most effective. As part of the stimulus money that was awarded to the City, staff will be working with a consultant to provide this information to the public through informational materials, a virtual information center, and/or a series of seminars on green building topics. Staff is also working with members of the Green Building Work Group to develop more outreach ideas and prioritize target groups and improvements.

Finally, in the coming months, staff and members of the Green Building Work Group will begin identifying green building incentives for new and existing development. The potential incentives range from federal and state options that the City could use or promote, or development of local incentives that the City could initiate. Updates on any incentives the City could implement will be provided once the group identifies suitable options.

IV. CONCLUSION

The policy has been an effective way to achieve green building in new development. By formalizing the City's expectation, the development community is aware of our requirements and can incorporate the necessary features into the design of the project from the start. In addition, the flexibility provision has been successful in achieving green building components in projects where official certification may not be feasible. As shown in the table, this has been

particularly important for the smaller projects that the City reviewed. Staff does not recommend any changes to the policy at this time and will continue to monitor any issues that arise.

Staff: Faroll Hamer, Director, Planning and Zoning
Barbara Ross, Deputy Director, Planning and Zoning
Katie Parker, Urban Planner, Planning and Zoning

Attachment #1 – Images of approved developments



Lane Development



Institute for Defense Analysis (IDA)



Restaurant Depot



Church of God Addition



Polk Elementary School Addition



Virginia Theological Seminary (VTS)



Hoffman Blocks 11 and 12



The King Building at 923